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Barren County



CFS *focus*

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FOCUS ON *family*

Father ready for job training

By Anya Armes Weber

John Murphy told Kenneth Doakes on a Monday last month, "Come back to the office on Wednesday; we'll have a group of people here to help you."

Doakes wondered if Barren County's CFS coordinator could deliver.

Two days later at his first CFS meeting, Doakes saw Murphy's word was good.

"It was a miracle," the 42-year-old said. "I'm so appreciative. It's very seldom you get people who will want to help you right there on the spot."

Doakes, a Glasgow resident, was laid off from his job at a car dealership last month. He said he wasn't making a lot of money, "but it was enough for me and my family to get by." He was supporting his wife, Margaret, and four children: Cornelius, 5; Tereze, 4; Cortez, 3; and baby Cornisha, 3 months. Doakes also pays child support for a son living in another county.

"It's very seldom you get people who will want to help you right there on the spot."

**— Kenneth Doakes,
CFS client**

Without the paycheck from the dealership, family finances were unstable. Doakes checked in with some of the CFC workers he knows in the Barren office, "not just for money or benefits, but for training."

Murphy asked Doakes what his interests were, what he wanted to learn.

"The options he offered sounded so fantastic," Doakes said.

Doakes said he doesn't let pride get in his way. "I'm one who wants to do things on my own, but sometimes you have to ask for help.

You don't have to take the help and keep it the rest of your life."

At that first CFS meeting, representatives from a Family Resource Center, the health department, employment services, Lifeskills and CFC staff joined Doakes to work on what's called a "PARTNER" (Putting All Resources Together Naturally Encourages Recipients) plan in Barren County.

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Practice produces real world results

By John Murphy

Barren County staff knew employees needed to believe CFS would work before they started asking clients and community partners to help make it work. So every employee was assigned to one of eight practice teams to work real cases using CFS to address clients' needs.

"We had no families involved, no community partners," said Linda Huffman, a service region administrator associate for the Barren River Region. "But we had everyone in the building involved in the practice meetings."

The practice paid off. Even staff who

weren't program experts brought a wealth of knowledge to the meetings.

"It started out as just a family," Huffman said. "but now it's *our* family. At the hour and a half mock meeting, everyone contributed."

Kelly Lawrence, a new employee in the child support office, said another positive aspect of these "practices" was that all staff could see how workers in other offices assist clients.

Now, "I have a much better understanding of what the other areas do," she said.

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COMMUNITY *partners*

P and P's referral network with resource centers boosts CFS

By John Murphy

In support of CFS, the Protection and Permanency Treatment Team in Barren County has partnered with the local Family Resource Centers to create a joint support/referral network.


"When the concept of Comprehensive Family Services was proposed to the pilot counties, we began to brainstorm how we could use CFS to further benefit our clients," said Liz Wade, supervisor of the Barren County Protection and Permanency Treatment Team.

The team decided that partnering a social worker with a Family Resource Center would enhance community and client support of CFS. The program will partner five social workers with seven centers that cover 11 schools.

When Family Resource Center workers have a question or concern about a family, they will call their social worker partner instead of the Protection and Permanency office.

Likewise, the social workers will use the Family Resource Centers to help meet client or community needs.

"Everyone is excited about the partnerships," said Protection and Permanency worker Erin Wolfe, a treatment team member.

"We all agree that more comprehensive issues may be addressed with this approach in the future — such as truancy, the dropout rate and the head lice problem." 

CHAMPION efforts

The Barren River Region's Champions pose with Barren County's CFS liaison Nancy Rawlings and Secretary Viola Miller on Dec. 5 at the Champions meeting in Bowling Green.



Group keeps spirits high in Barren

By John Murphy

Tonya Feese, Pat Smith and Connie Wells are not only the Everyone a Leader "Champions" for Barren County; they are also the resident cheerleaders for the CFS program. The three are there to pump up staff and promote CFS.

Champions are working with the community partners, addressing needs like heating assistance and winter clothing.

Champions share information on CFS and EAL activities at every county meeting, Service Region Administrator Associate Linda Huffman said. They've talked up EAL so well, "almost all our other counties are asking for the skill building."

The group has innovative ways to motivate the staff, like awarding restaurant gift certificates to the staff member who is the most supportive of CFS each month. All employees can vote on that award.

Wells, a Family Support supervisor, said the Champions often check to see if employees are wearing their name tags. "We'll give Smarties to the ones who have them on, and Dum Dums to people without them."

She said her group surprises staff during EAL training by walking through yelling, "name tag check!" and distributing candy.

"If we make things fun, that's what it's all about." 🌸

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Huffman said, "none of us knew exactly how it would work. We didn't expect such a group process. "The purpose develops while you're sitting there. Faces light up as we think of ways to help. The meetings focus on nothing but positive results for the family."

When Protection and Permanency worker Joan Norris submitted a case for CFS practice, she didn't expect to get the help she received from her team. The case had been transferred from another county, and she knew very little about the family and their needs.

The team of staff from the Family Support, Child Support, Protection and

Permanency and regional offices had been selected before anyone knew what the case would be.

"I was amazed to find out that three members of the team had worked with this family before, when the staff members had worked in the other county," Norris said. "They provided me with some excellent background information to assist me in working with the family. I also received some good recommendations as to what community partners were available to help me address some immediate issues for the family."

Norris was able to tackle those immediate needs quickly, and the family has made some positive changes."

"I am a believer in the CFS concept," Norris said. 🌸

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Doakes was comfortable since he knows many of his partners. "There can be a million people there and I wouldn't be shy because of the situation," he said.

Goals were set: Partners who thought they could help listed their tasks and deadlines. Doakes listed his own responsibilities, like making contacts about training.

"He surprised us all," Family Support Supervisor Connie Wells said. "He went out on his own to ask about training at the fire department before one of our workers was able to go."

Doakes has also asked about instruction at the police department. "It never hurts to try on your own. They (CFC staff and partners) are doing their part, so I'm doing my part."

For 15 years, Doakes worked at another county's fire department, and he dreams of having a job where he can help people, like being a police or fire dispatcher. Those jobs usually require a high school equivalency, so he'll begin GED classes next month.

"Dreams can't come true unless you do something about it," he said.

Doakes has been approved for K-TAP and will get job training through the Work Experience Program. His family has medical cards, and he gets car insurance through the Kentucky Works Program.

"Where has all this been?" Doakes said when he learned of all partners who could help him.

Wells said Doakes often drops by the office to talk about the progress he's making. "His enthusiasm is encouraging."

One concern Doakes brought up at his "PARTNER" meeting was providing Christmas presents for his kids. A Family Resource Center representative set up a trip to Kmart with Kiwanis Club members so Doakes' children could select their gifts.

Doakes, who was adopted as a child, said he tries to give his children the attention he missed when he was their age. "I know how it is not to have a father, not to be encouraged to go to school, to study."

He said CFS is helping him think about his goals – having a house and sending his kids to college. "Most everything I do is for them, it's not for me."

Doakes likes CFS's team approach.

"I haven't had so many people backing me up in a long time," he said. "If a person has needs, it's there for them. But you've got to make your effort, you can't just sit there." 🌸